

daily event just now is a fiddle lesson from a master who lives on the north side of the Park, and who gives himself such airs that his pupils have to go to him, since he won't be at the pains of coming to them."

"Then she politely hoped that she might soon see Captain Clough again, and so resumed her march, leaving him with the impression that he had scarcely fulfilled the expectations which had evoked her cordial greeting. (Of course there was not the ghost of a shadow of a hope!—there never had been, nor ever would be, any. It only remained to call a hansom and drive back to St. James' Place, where Otto von Kahlenburg must by this time be impatiently awaiting the return of a friendly emissary.)

For Otto von Kahlenburg was in London. It was, indeed, in some measure because he was in London that Jack Clough was now occupying the St. James' pied-a-terre, which was the symbol of sufficient means and occasional obligatory touch with the metropolis. His young friend had invoked his aid, rather as a matter of right than as a favour, and he had responded to the appeal—not very unwillingly, it is true. On reaching his rooms, he found, as he had anticipated, that Otto was already in possession, and the latter, throwing the end of a cigar into the fire, started up, with peremptory demands.

"Well? You have been there?—you have seen them? What did they say?"
"I have been there and I have seen them," the older man composedly replied. "They didn't say much."

"You told them that I was in England?"

"No; I thought it better not to tell them that. If I had done so, they would have said more, no doubt; but they said enough—Mrs. Hamilton did, at least—to convince me that discretion was advisable. To speak plainly, my dear fellow, Mrs. Hamilton does not love you."

"Do I ask Mrs. Hamilton to love me?"

"Probably not; yet I presume that you ask her, or will soon ask her, to receive you. And the fact is that, as at present advised, she will see you hanged first!"

"She said that!"
"Well, she gave me to understand as much."

"And Daphne?"
"Oh, Miss Hamilton was apologetic in advance. Whether she guessed that you were already in this country, or not I can't say; but she evidently expected that you would put in an appearance before long, and she was anxious that you should know how much she regretted her mother's determination to slam the door of their house in your face."

Von Kahlenburg laughed good-humouredly. "My dear Clough, you will never allow her to treat me in that way."

"How the deuce am I to prevent her? And if it comes to that, why the deuce should I?"

"Why?—because you are my friend, of course. As for how—well, I think that if you and Daphne are on my side, means will be found. By the way, you must have contrived to see Daphne alone, or she could not have spoken to you as you said she did."

"Yes, I had a private interview with her, but not as the result of any contrivance on my part. I happened, after leaving Palace Gate, to meet her on her way home from her music lesson. She has a violin master on the other side of the Park whom she honours with a visit every afternoon just now. It seems."

The young man rubbed his hands gleefully. "Aha! every afternoon? That is capital! Then I know whom she will meet to-morrow afternoon."

"Oh, naturally. But look here, Otto—I have a conscience, and although you are kind enough to call me your friend, I am also Mrs. Hamilton's friend, you must remember. I ought not to lend myself to schemes which may end disastrously for her and her daughter. In a word, your uncle's authorisation becomes important. Have you asked him for it?"

"His authorisation? No; I have not asked him for that—how could I? It would not be customary. In our country we are a great deal more formal about such matters than you are, and to request my uncle's consent to my marriage would be as much as requesting him to place himself in communication with Mrs. Hamilton at once. Which would make her excusably angry, I am afraid."

"There seems to be some ground for fearing that it might," observed Clough dryly. "At the same time,

your subterfuge doesn't deceive me. If you have said nothing formal to your uncle, you have certainly said something informal, and your guilty look shows that he was not pleased."

"I do not believe," answered Count von Kahlenburg's heir-presumptive, evasively, "that it would be possible to please him with anything short of a princely alliance; but he is a slave to beauty, and Daphne will win his heart easily enough when the time comes. Meanwhile, nobody wants you to lend yourself to disastrous schemes. All you have to do, my good friend, until you receive further instructions from me, is to do nothing at all."

"Oh, that's all, is it? I like your 'further instructions!' Well, perhaps you had better see Miss Hamilton: you will evidently manage to see her, whether it is better for you to do so or not. But take notice, please, that I reserve to myself complete future liberty of action."

CHAPTER VIII.
DETERMINATION.

It is a great blessing to be young, and an even greater blessing to know your own mind. Few people, to be sure, when in possession of the former, realise the full importance of the latter; yet there belongs to early life an instinctive, unconscious contempt for obstacles which goes a long way towards the achievement of results. "He who will be Pope," says the proverb, "let him take it strongly into his head, and he shall be Pope." So Otto von Kahlenburg, having taken it strongly into his head that Daphne Hamilton and no other should be his wife, strode across the misty stretches of Hyde Park with a light-hearted determination which was in no wise dashed by the ascertained disapproval of persons who undoubtedly had it in their power to forbid the unions. His uncle? Oh, well, his uncle might, and probably would, make a fuss; but what then? A childless widower, who has but one near relative in the world, has given hostages to fortune, and cannot, unless he be abnormally unfeeling, show much fight when respectfully defied by that one relative. As for Mrs. Hamilton, her mysterious prejudice must be overcome—would assuredly be overcome from the moment that she should be called upon to insure or destroy her daughter's happiness. What signified—what alone signified—was the question of whether her daughter's happiness was at stake or not. If Count Otto was confident upon that point, it may be pleaded for him that Daphne had, in those Bayreuth woods, given him fair excuse for confidence; if he was also intermittently diffident (as in truth he was) let him be credited with some measure of becoming modesty.

He had no need to ask the way to Palace Gate; for, foreigner though he was, he knew his London very well indeed, and had hosts of friends (and many friendly hosts) in a country which he frequently visited in pursuit of sport. Only of course he could not tell for certain at what precise hour Miss Hamilton might be expected to illuminate that somewhat dreary quarter of the town by her advent, and he had, in prudence, allowed himself a wide margin of time, thus exciting the visible curiosity of a loitering policeman, whom he passed and re-passed, while patrolling an exit from Kensington Gardens upon which it was necessary for him to keep an eye. The London police, unlike some of their foreign colleagues, are a simple, unsuspecting folk; so that Count Otto ran little risk of being mistaken for a dynamiter, with designs upon the neighbouring Albert Memorial. The expectations of the gentleman in blue were doubtless verified when a lady, bearing a violin-case, became visible through the fog and falling darkness, and when the well-dressed suunterer sprang forward, hat in hand, to intercept her passage. Such encounters, it may be presumed, are not unfrequently witnessed by the guardians of law and order on that particular beat. Moreover, although this did not happen to be an assignation, it had all the appearance of one; for the young lady exhibited no sign of surprise or perturbation.

"How do you do?" she said composedly. "I was wondering whether you were in England or not. You have seen Captain Clough, perhaps?"

"Of course I am in England, and of course I have seen him," the young man answered. "Did he tell you that I was here, then?"

"No, he didn't tell me that; if he

had, I shouldn't have been wondering, should I? But he seems to have told you that he met me near this spot yesterday. What else did he tell you, if it is allowable to ask?"

"He told me," replied Otto, after a momentary hesitation, "that there would be very little use in my calling at your mother's house."

"Ah, exactly! And that is why you have waylaid me?"

"It is a good reason, surely! You cannot have supposed that I should submit tamely to be refused sight of you."

Daphne laughed. "Tame or fierce," she remarked, "you will have to submit, I am afraid, to the consequences of an antipathy which I regret quite as much as you can. But there it is, you see, and it can't be helped. I begged Captain Clough to take an opportunity of explaining and apologising to you."

No apology, she was assured, was requisite; but something in the nature of an explanation would be very gratefully received. If it was not asking too much, might he implore her to turn back into Kensington Gardens, and grant him five or ten minutes of conversation? He had travelled rather a long distance in quest of that boon, he pathetically added.

"I thought," returned Daphne demurely, "that you had travelled to this country in quest of something a little more exciting. Your name, at all events, has been mentioned among other distinguished guests who are expected to shoot Lord Dovedale's coverts towards the end of the month."

So she had taken the trouble to inform herself as to his engagements! That was an encouraging circumstance, despite the somewhat discouraging tone which she was pleased to assume. Her silent compliance

with his request that she should retrace her steps might likewise be taken as an encouragement to the avowal which broke forth from him before they had stepped many yards, side by side, along the deserted Broad Walk.

"I did not come to England to shoot pheasants—if Lord Dovedale and others have been so kind as to invite me, that is only because I gave them a hint, and because I had to make some excuse to my uncle—I came simply and solely to see you, to tell you what you know already, that I worship you, and that I cannot live without you!"

Miss Hamilton walked on, looking straight before her and answering nothing.

"I did not know that before," was her eventual remark.

"Oh, I think you must have known. But even if you did not, you know now, well?"

"Well—I am sorry. What more can I say? I won't pretend not to have known—though we have never spoken about it, she and I—why my mother hurried away from Marienbad. There seemed to be a chance that this might happen. If you will promise me that it shall never happen again, perhaps we may continue to be friends and there will be no objection to our meeting occasionally."

"Promise you that it shall never happen again! But—for what do you take me, then?"

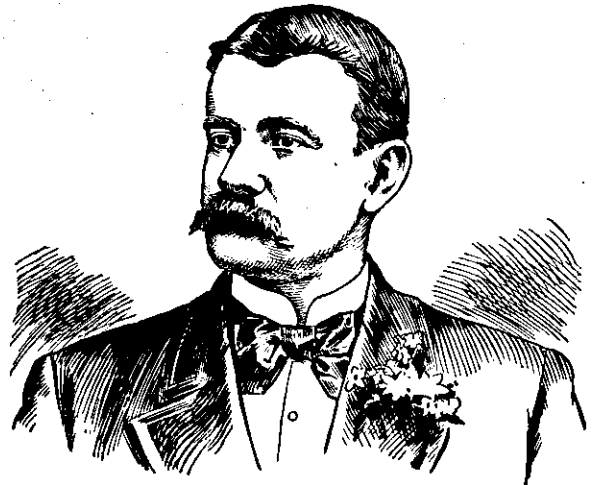
The speaker's accents of amazed consternation may have been a trifle exaggerated; he could not, and did not, imagine that Daphne seriously contemplated dismissing him in that curt, unfeeling fashion. Nevertheless, he was chilled, and it sorely comforted him to hear her reply much tranquility.

"You see, it is less a question of what you are or of what I take you

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